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North-West Romania: going in the right direction



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Regional and
Urban Policy

PANORAMA

In this issue ...

The spring issue of *Panorama* magazine, which is now available to download, covers a wide range of topics from urban issues to culture and industrial transition.

We have an exclusive interview with Commissioner Corina Crețu, looking back over the past four years and what Cohesion Policy has achieved in that time. Our regional focus this time features North-West Romania, with a selection of projects and commentary from the Emil Boc, mayor of Cluj-Napoca and Marcel Ioan Boloș, head of the Regional Development Agency. We also explore the findings of a recent URBACT report into how city authorities can help achieve gender equality in a variety of areas, and find out how the Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative is helping islands generate their own sustainable power.

In our In Your Own Words section we have reflections from Czechia and the Kujawsko-Pomorskie region in Poland, and we also hear from younger people via their experiences in the

Youth4Regions media programme. And there is a fascinating look at how the benefits of Cohesion Policy were highlighted by a regular national tv show in Estonia.

We find out how Interreg programmes have inspired South Korea in their efforts to cooperate with neighbouring countries, analyse the spread of populism and Euroscepticism, and our regular sections on financial instruments and findings from our Open Data portal are also included. The projects section visits Poland, the Netherlands and the Alpine Space.

Happy reading!



AGNÈS MONFRET

Head of Communication Unit, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission



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EDITORIAL

The Cohesion Policy programmes for 2021-2027 are now under way. Following the adoption of the Commission's proposals for the new period in May 2018, the Commission departments have been busy with assessing the investment needs, challenges and potential of each Member State. Now the time has come to present the Commission's views on how Cohesion Policy could best support these investment ambitions, while empowering EU regions yet again to help achieve the priorities at the EU level – namely a smarter, greener, carbon-free, more connected, more social Europe that is closer to its citizens.

In this round, for the very first time, the presentation of the new programmes is linked to the adoption of country reports in the framework of the EU Semester cycle for economic policy coordination. The aim is to make sure that Cohesion Policy investment priorities for 2021-2027 contribute to achieving the broader goals of EU economic policy coordination: ensuring sound public finances, preventing excessive macro-economic imbalances, supporting structural reforms to create more jobs and growth, and boosting investment.

Thus, the challenges are significant, as are our common responsibilities. This is why we wanted to visit each Member State capital, meet the various Cohesion Policy stakeholders and hold a first exchange on how best to work together on these new programmes. This is the purpose of the 27 national launch events being held during March and April 2019: to offer you the opportunity to meet a wide range of Commission officials from



different departments and discuss your country's priorities for Cohesion Policy investments in 2021-2027 – a process in which I have the honour to participate.

These launch events are, however, just the first step in a partnership dialogue that is expected to last several months. I would like to strongly encourage you to play an active part in this dialogue. I often say that Cohesion Policy stakeholders are its very soul, and even more so when it comes to programme design and preparation. Your knowledge and experience can make a real difference over the coming decade.

Meanwhile, I would also like to invite you to join us in our endeavour to foster citizens' participation in the coming EU elections. A number of EU officials are already going out into the field to engage directly with Europeans, especially in the context of citizens' dialogues. However, these efforts will certainly prove much more fruitful with your support, as you are particularly well placed to explain to our fellow Europeans, in your own words, what the Union does, provides and achieves for them, at the heart of the world's largest economic bloc. So, let's join forces! ■

Corina Crețu

European Commissioner for Regional Policy

Commissioner Crețu reflects on Cohesion Policy achievements

As the Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy, Corina Crețu nears the end of her term in office, she highlights some of the key successes of Cohesion Policy across the EU regions and looks to future opportunities for it to make a significant difference as a central pillar of the European project.



The Juncker Commission has committed to delivering in many areas over the last five years. What are the three key Cohesion Policy achievements you are most proud of?

I am proud of the numerous achievements accomplished during my mandate as Commissioner for Regional Policy. By funding hundreds of thousands of projects across Europe, Cohesion Policy ensures that every region, city and village can benefit from the European project. It is a strong, direct link between the EU and its regions and cities, which is crucial at a time when populism and Euroscepticism can be tempting answers for some citizens.

The **Task Force for Better Implementation** helped eight Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) to make swift and good use of remaining Cohesion Policy funds from the 2007-2013 budget period, which otherwise might have been lost and thus would not have served their purpose, which is to generate growth and job creation. Later, the Task Force

also concentrated on implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes, in particular by supporting administrative capacity and learning the lessons from the past.

The **High Level Group on Simplification**, which we set up between July 2015 and November 2017, showed that you can drastically simplify the rules while keeping high standards in terms of the sound management of EU funds. This also contributed to the proposal for a better Cohesion Policy in the next EU budget period which starts in 2021. Among the outcomes of this Group, the Commission has already proposed more favourable treatment for SMEs investing in research and innovation, and the Commission's legislative proposal for the post-2020 is 50% shorter than the current legislation.

Both the 'catching up' and the 'coal regions in transition' initiatives highlighted the need for a custom-made approach to industrial transition and economic modernisation so that all regions can hold their own in a globalised world.

With the '**catching up initiative**', we are helping low-income regions to overcome obstacles to growth related to the macroeconomic framework, structural reforms, governance and investment as well as EU (ESI) Funds. In particular, we have helped two types of regions: 'low-growth regions' – that are characterised by a persistent lack of growth over the last decade or more (mostly in Southern Europe); and 'low-income regions' – whose GDP is on the rise but which remain very poor. Under this initiative, we have four pilot regions, two in Poland and two in Romania, leading to some significant structural changes there. The second phase of this initiative is currently under way in new regions and with new themes, such as energy efficiency with the so-called 'coal regions in transition' and the industrial transition. At the beginning of 2018, the initiative was officially launched in two regions of Slovakia, focusing on their specific needs.

With the coal regions in transition initiative, we are targeting seven countries (Poland, Germany, Czechia, Romania,

Bulgaria, Greece and Spain) where coal is still an important energy and employment source to support them in the shift to modern and cleaner energy efficiency. The coal sector currently employs about 237 000 people in seven countries. Experts interact closely with those regional and national authorities interested in participating to develop pragmatic solutions to support the structural transformation process with flexibility. The programmes already include support, for example, for SMEs, innovation, low-carbon transition, social inclusion and for overall societal transformation and modernisation. The total Cohesion Policy funding available for the corresponding regions is estimated at around EUR 20 billion for the 2014-2020 period. We have, for instance, agreed with the Czechia authorities to specifically re-allocate EUR 232 million to coal regions in transition. Similarly, as a follow-up to several missions in Poland, we are now supporting six flagship projects in Silesia with a total of EUR 100 million.

More generally, I think we can all be immensely pleased with the amount and effectiveness of European Structural

Investment Funds. According to the latest information available on the Open Data platform, EUR 405 billion had been invested in Europe's real economy from these EU funds by the end of September 2018. That represented nearly two-thirds of the ESIF's budget invested halfway through the 2014-2020 EU budget period.

Leading Cohesion Policy means working closely, every day, with stakeholders at various levels: national, regional and local.

How have you worked with them?

Due to the direct link Cohesion Policy creates with stakeholders, I have had the chance to see the impact of EU-funded projects in the Member States. During my mandate, it has also been important for me to discuss the challenges and opportunities with managing authorities and direct beneficiaries. I have been especially keen to consult local stakeholders on specific issues, such as discussing immigration with mayors, industrial transition with regional presidents, etc. I have also been keen to foster relations with

countries and regions outside of the EU to build relationships and share best practice. In this context, I found my official visits to Quito in Ecuador – for the World Urban Forum Habitat III – and to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and China very interesting and fruitful.

How has the way we manage and communicate Cohesion Policy changed, and are we getting closer to the citizens?

Unfortunately, we are currently witnessing an increase in anti-EU and populist support across the continent and beyond, as the recent DG REGIO study on anti-EU voting showed (see The geography of discontent, page 28). Inequalities are certainly linked to this phenomenon as people feel their institutions do not respond appropriately to their needs and demands for more rights and better well-being.



Corina Crețu meets team members of the EU-funded MASMEC Biomed project, Italy



Corina Crețu greets Huang Qiang, Vice-Governor of the Henan province in Central China



Corina Crețu with Emmanuel Macron during a visit to the French Senate in Paris to present proposals for the future Cohesion Policy

Cohesion Policy is crucial in addressing this issue. As the name suggests, Cohesion Policy is about solidarity and prosperity for all. It ensures that every region, city and village can benefit from the European project and can aim at higher standards of living thanks to the support of Cohesion Policy.

Sadly, this is not always easy for everyone to see. For example, a new EU-funded highway in the regions should be correlated with the new job opportunities appearing there. It is indirect effects like this, in particular, that many people do not see.

The best way to tackle Euroscepticism is to show citizens that the EU brings them a lot of benefits; and that we have

very good stories to tell. We have several communication activities that aim at making our policy more visible among citizens: campaigns, including on social media, projects and events, such as Citizens' Dialogues.

Let me mention, for example, the 'EU in my Region' campaign where last year over 2500 projects from 27 countries opened their doors to more than 450 000 visitors to showcase their EU co-funded projects.

Also, the 'Road Trip Project' is an initiative that provides young Europeans with an opportunity to experience first-hand what EU solidarity stands for and what it does on the ground. It is a project-related journey throughout Europe

where the participants act as ambassadors for a variety of projects and initiatives enabled by the EU. During 4 months in 2018, the 8 travellers crossed more than 20 countries, visited over 50 EU co-funded projects and produced more than 60 video stories which have been viewed 22.8 million times.

How do you see Europe and Cohesion Policy in 10 years?

Cohesion Policy will continue, in co-operation with other EU instruments, to be the most effective, place-based, policy for tackling such challenges. In this respect, the Commission has proposed a revised design framed around a few core principles.



Commissioner Crețu met Carlos Martinez Minguez, Vice-President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions during the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Corina Crețu (left, front), with Gabrijela Zalac, Croatian Minister of Regional Development and EU Funds (at her side) visit a Roma settlement in Croatia

Programmes will be more flexible and adaptable through a lighter programming menu, easier modification and a systemic mid-term review of programmes in 2025. Focusing resources on key EU priorities (innovation and climate) with fewer and more operational enabling conditions will ensure effectiveness. And the policy will become more strategic by better aligning it with the European semester

Simplification, through a set of around 80 measures, is designed to accelerate the effective take-up of implementation and sharply reduce the administrative burden on managing authorities and beneficiaries. In particular, cancellation of the procedure for designating management and control bodies, extended

recourse to simplified cost options, abandonment of the major project procedures and a sharp reduction in management verifications are all expected to bring substantial benefits

With continued political support, I see Cohesion Policy as being a central pillar of the European project, both in terms of concrete improvements to citizens' lives, but also in terms of fostering solidarity and the sense of European identity.

Do you have a last message for Panorama readers?

My message is simple: thank you! Your dedication, imagination and hard work are extremely valuable and definitely contributed to the success of our policy.

So, thank you for being part of our team and for making my work not just more visible, but also much easier and more enjoyable over the past five years! I wish you all the best for the future! ■



Gender equality: how cities can take the lead

A new report by the EU's URBACT programme shows how city authorities can take some simple, practical steps towards gender equality through data collection, policy and consultation – and improve daily life for citizens throughout the EU.

Be it deconstructing damaging stereotypes, changing the way budgets are allocated or better supporting female entrepreneurs, there are numerous ways city authorities can take the lead in the fight for gender equality. A new report by the URBACT programme highlights a series of innovative practices in cities around the EU and suggests practical ways in which authorities can make a real difference to their citizens' lives.

URBACT is a European Territorial Cooperation programme that aims to foster sustainable, integrated urban development in cities across Europe. Its mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, through networking, sharing experiences and identifying good practices.

For example, in Estonia, URBACT's Interactive Cities network enabled the city of Tartu to strengthen citizen participation in urban planning, with a focus on mobilising young people, as

part of its continued drive towards digitalising its administration. And in Naples, Italy, the 2nd Chance initiative breathed new life into a listed but abandoned former military hospital, transforming it into a popular community space with a variety of functions.

Now, URBACT's Gender Equal Cities report aims to show city authorities how they can implement gender-sensitive policies and initiatives that will improve the everyday lives of the people who live there. The authors hope to increase awareness of gender-based inequalities at a local level, show how they affect citizens, and highlight how cities can take action to tackle the issues raised.

Triggering the right questions

Gender Equal Cities makes the case for local authorities to bring about positive change through prioritising and mainstreaming gender-sensitive policymaking.

'By its very nature, gender equality is a long-term goal so, while this report is not exhaustive, it's a reflection of current concerns, a showcase of good practice and an assessment of today's context,' says report co-author Sally Kneeshaw.

“After consultation with the women in the city council, we named 25 new streets after famous Polish women. It’s a very visible achievement! Now people are walking along those streets celebrating women’s achievements throughout history.”

Marta Mazurek, Mayor’s Proxy for Equal Treatment, Poznan



‘Rather than offering ready-made solutions, it’s a starting point: a trigger for the right questions to be posed to support all urban policymakers in improving gender equality in Europe.’

The report highlights innovative and simple-to-replicate initiatives that have already been implemented in a number of European cities.

In Râmnicu Sărat, Romania, for example, authorities learned that municipal sports facilities were disproportionately used by men. A series of consultations with women enabled the city to take inexpensive measures – such as changing the way they advertised the services and providing women-only sessions – to make the facilities more inclusive and thereby increase their use by women.

Bologna in Italy, meanwhile, instigated a media campaign and recruited, trained and empowered young women to act as ambassadors to help counter discrimination against Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities. And to guard against potential stereotyping, the municipal council of Cascais in Portugal provided training for all staff in its communications department on how to avoid reproducing traditional, outdated gender stereotypes in their digital and print materials.

A CLEARER VIEW OF PRIORITIES IN UMEÅ

By gathering and studying data about patterns of transport and employment, the city of Umeå in eastern Sweden demonstrated that something as simple as clearing snow in winter disproportionately affects women. Their data showed that women in the city are most likely to be the first people to use the roads in the morning as they go out to care-taking roles, often on bicycles. The city council therefore instructed its highways department to clear the snow from bike lanes first each day, rather than the roads. The roads are still cleared, but by paying attention to gender, the city is better able to prioritise its services.

‘Every time there is a new project on sustainability or mobility, we integrate an understanding of how this will affect women, men, boys and girls in the city: whose problem are we going to solve with this?’ says Linda Gustafsson, gender equality officer for the city of Umeå. ‘You have to understand what kind of city you’re living and working in: what kind of people live here, their needs and wants, where they work, how they spend their free time, and how much money they have. You have to understand the city to really make gender equality work in your city. Not every solution is relevant to every city, but the approach is relevant to all cities.’



City leaders driving change

Despite making up more than half of the population, women are underrepresented at almost every level of governance in the EU: just 28.6% of regional assembly members and 36% of municipal council members are women, and only 15% of mayors are women. Women continue to be paid 16% less than men, to carry out more unpaid work and to experience gender-based violence. The report suggests a number of ways whereby city authorities can make a difference (see infographic below).

By working with city leaders, organising and participating in EU events and facilitating expert exchange, the URBACT programme has translated existing knowledge into clear, actionable recommendations. It highlights the experience of European frontrunners as it drives the gender-equality agenda, in close partnership with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

‘Although we have come some way in the past few decades, there is still a lot to be done to achieve gender equality for all women,’ says Corina Crețu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, in the report’s foreword. ‘We, European decision-makers, have the responsibility to foster fairer cities, where people are no longer faced with gender-based violence or injustice.’ ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://urbact.eu/>
communication@urbact.eu

URBACT enables cities to work together to develop new and sustainable solutions to major urban challenges, through networking, sharing knowledge and building capacities for urban practitioners. URBACT is a European Territorial Cooperation programme fostering sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. It has been funded by the European Regional Development Fund and EU Member and Partner States since 2002.

VIENNA LEADS THE WAY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING



Insightful tour of Vienna during a ‘Gender Equal Cities’ study visit

Vienna has one of the longest legacies of gender-sensitive planning in Europe, with the Women’s Office opening in 1992 and gender mainstreaming – the implementation of gender as a cross-sectional issue – starting in 2005. Today, there are gender experts and multipliers all over the city. Gender is integrated into its strategies and all public space designed and built by the city takes gender into consideration. The outcome is an urban landscape that benefits everyone, be it parks, pavements or social housing.

‘The City of Vienna realised very early that there is a connection between the quality of everyday life and the physical structure of a city, and that this looks very different if you are a woman or man,’ says Eva Kail, gender-planning expert for the city. Among projects developed with this in mind was an invitation to girls to help planners design municipal parks, when it became clear that girls were discouraged from using parks after the age of 13 while boys continued to play there much longer. And an architectural competition invited female architects to design a housing complex, focusing on making everyday life easier for the families and individuals living there, from the women’s perspective.

As a world leader in gender mainstreaming, the Vienna authorities have published a number of guides for cities wishing to follow their example, including a focus on how to achieve gender mainstreaming in an era of limited resources. Vienna’s officials believe gender-sensitive planning is in fact efficient as it better targets resources.



“ We, European decision-makers, have the responsibility to foster fairer cities, where people are no longer faced with gender-based violence or injustice. ”

Corina Crețu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy

SPOTLIGHT ON EQUALITY

The Gender Equality in Cities event was hosted by European Commissioner Corina Crețu in Brussels on 7 March, the day before International Women’s Day. It took the form of a political round-table discussion among mayors, deputy-mayors and other elected representatives. As many events on gender equality are organised at the local level, this opportunity was used to create a chain between various events and to bring consistent messages and recommendations to the attention of the largest audience possible. The metaphor of ‘carrying the torch’ was used to illustrate the idea of taking the outcomes from one event to the next.

Speakers included the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Mayor of Galdakao in Spain, Ibon Uribe. He had already participated in the events organised by the Committee of the Regions and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions on this topic, and

was the first ‘torch carrier’, passing it to the Commission for the Eurocities Mayors Summit, which also discussed women’s empowerment (20-21 March).

The 7 March event featured a short presentation of the URBACT report and key messages from the monitoring tool for regional gender equality developed by DG JRC and DG REGIO. The UN-Habitat Gender Equality Enhancer was also briefly presented. A discussion then followed on how to foster gender equality in cities by addressing three main topics: representation and participation, planning and public space, and the integration of migrants. Insights from participants on local experiences and best practices led to a fruitful conversation on how to tackle challenges and address remaining gaps that are sometimes not so apparent.

Commissioner Crețu concluded that the event was very inspiring and brought the necessary attention to the long-term struggle of achieving gender equality.



Participants in the round table on ‘Gender equality in cities’ held on 7 March 2019

Financial instruments: a smarter use of EU resources



Johnathan Denness, the new head of the Financial Instruments and International Financial Institutions Relations Unit at the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy tells *Panorama* magazine about the importance of financial instruments in complementing traditional funding support.

Why financial instruments and why use them in your Member State/region?

In the 2021-2027 programming period, Cohesion Policy resources are planned to be scarcer. At the same time, we are facing important challenges in Europe. We need to continue boosting economic growth and creating employment. We must do more with less and this can be achieved through financial instruments.

Commission services are committed to making this smarter use of EU resources through financial instruments as a more efficient and sustainable alternative to complement traditional grant-based support. It should be pointed out that financial instruments are not an end in themselves but a policy delivery mechanism. Financial instruments help to trigger investments on the ground for revenue-generating and cost-saving activities while maximising private investment with minimum public support to deliver the Cohesion Policy objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Besides the obvious advantages of leveraging additional resources and recycling funds over the long term, the repayable nature of financial instruments offers incentives to better performance, including greater financial discipline at the level of supported projects. Last but not least, the reflows from these investments become resources at the disposal of national authorities that can subsequently be reinvested into further projects.

What is the status of implementation under the ERDF and CF?

The total programme amount committed to financial instruments is EUR 25 billion (European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and national co-financing). This represents almost 7% of the total allocation. However, there are significant variations among Member States, such as Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Latvia and Lithuania, which allocate a relatively large share of Cohesion Funds to financial instruments; only three Member States have not planned to deploy financial instruments.

The majority of financial instruments have already been set up and have started to support ERDF and CF resources through financial products, such as loans, guarantees and equity, supporting projects on the ground. Almost EUR 18 billion of the ERDF and CF have been channelled through financial instruments, which already exceeds the EUR 11.3 billion paid to final recipients via such instruments in the 2007-2013 period.

How do we achieve this better future? What support is the Commission offering?

We continue to support the development and implementation of financial instruments financed through Cohesion Policy programmes across all Member States. We are at the disposal of the Member States to reply to their questions, assisting in implementation, visiting them and providing support through the *fi-compass* technical assistance platform.

We also encourage peer-to-peer exchange among the Member States.

The TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER tool was designed to share expertise between bodies that manage funding under the ERDF and CF. It helps public officials involved in managing these funds to exchange knowledge, good practices and practical solutions to concrete problems, thus improving their administrative capacity and ensuring better results for the EU investments. For instance, there was a multi-country workshop on the EU-level financial instrument ‘SME Initiative’ organised in cooperation with the Maltese managing authority with the aim of bringing together Member States facing similar implementation challenges.

As to the future, in May 2018, the Commission adopted its proposal for a Common Provisions Regulation covering the 2021-2027 programming period. Interinstitutional negotiations are currently ongoing and good progress is being achieved in preparation for post-2020. The proposed Regulation introduces several simplification measures to incentivise a greater uptake of financial instruments by streamlining and updating provisions to ensure better and easier implementation as well as quicker set-up. Some of the main novelties are, for instance, better opportunities with regard to the combination of financial instruments and grants, more flexibility in conducting *ex-ante* assessments, as well as simplified eligibility and reporting rules. There will also be an option for Member States to ring fence a contribution to the InvestEU programme.

What is the purpose of fi-compass and how does it help?

The European Commission in partnership with the European Investment Bank established the *fi-compass* platform to offer advisory services on financial instruments under the European Structural

and Investment Funds (ESIF). *Fi-compass* is designed to support ESIF managing authorities and other practitioners by providing practical know-how and learning tools, including face-to-face training seminars and other events with ample networking opportunities.

We kicked-off 2019 by organising a targeted event on financial instruments supporting energy efficiency and renewable energies for a group of managing authorities brought together by the FIRECE project. This aims to improve the capacities of the public sector and related entities to plan territorially-based low-carbon strategies to meet the regional energy-saving targets defined by EU and national legislation. Over 50 representatives from managing authorities, national public banks and institutions and other stakeholders involved attended the event.

In addition, we also organise our flagship ‘FI Campus’ event every year, whereby participants can create their own individual learning curricula, choosing from parallel sessions to suit their particular interests, such as case studies, workshops, discussion panels and fund-specific sessions. Furthermore, this is a unique opportunity for participants and invited experts to network and exchange experience. FI Campus 2018, where the opportunities offered for financial instruments under the Omnibus Regulation were discussed, took place last December in Brussels. More than 360 stakeholders participated from all the EU countries.

Can you share any success stories? How does fi-compass support work?

As part one of *fi-compass*’ technical assistance strands, the multi-regional assistance is funding projects targeting the possible use of financial instruments in priority investment areas.

In the framework of the ‘Revolving Investments in Cities’ project, the common financing needs of cities have been established, thereby identifying those sectors in which FIs can support projects aligned with a city’s policy priorities.

One project case study focuses on the ‘Energiefonds Den Haag’, a city fund set up in 2013 in The Hague as part of the JESSICA initiative with the aim of co-financing energy projects integrated in sustainable urban development plans via loans, guarantees and equity investments. Financed from national and European financing sources, the current total is EUR 18.4 million. One of the success factors was the decision to start the fund as a pilot, with limited size initially. Other city funds could build on this experience by starting small scale and testing a given investment strategy with moderate financial commitments.

Revolving Investments in Cities also delivers a blueprint City Fund, a flexible model that can be adapted to the specific needs of cities across the EU to support urban development (this will feature in the next issue of *Panorama*). ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!vK73RD>

<https://www.fi-compass.eu/>



North-West Romania: focusing on sustainable regional development

The North-West Region of Romania is geographically and strategically placed in Europe, proactively involved in the industries of the future while remaining deeply rooted to its history and nature.

The North-West Region is one of Romania's eight development regions and is made up of six counties: Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj. It occupies a strategic position at the border with Hungary and Ukraine, and its neighbours in the Centre, West and North-East Regions of Romania.

The region spans an area of 34 159 square kilometres, which is 14.32% of the country's total area, and has a population of 2 730 132 inhabitants. Five European roads cross the region, a motorway is currently being built, and it boasts three international airports. In this largely rural and diverse area, dynamic cities, well-known universities and business infrastructures coexist with lovely villages, beautiful landscapes and impressive historical buildings.

Country-wide attractions

North-West Romania is one of the country's more picturesque regions thanks to features such as the Apuseni Mountains and the special cultural and folk heritage in this unique ethnographic area. It is a multi-ethnic region where Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Armenians, Roma and other groups live side by side.



The region's biggest towns are Cluj-Napoca – Romania's second largest city (2011 census) – Baia-Mare, Oradea, Zalău, Satu Mare and Bistrița. They are regarded as both regional hubs of economic development and towns with special cultural and historic heritage. There are three metropolitan areas in the region: Cluj-Napoca, Oradea and Baia Mare.

In terms of regional economy, the North-West Region ranks fourth in Romania in terms of GDP and fifth in exports, and is aiming to become one of the most dynamically developing regions in Central and Eastern Europe. With a developed economy based on services and industry, it also boasts the

< Oradea City Hall is one of many beautiful buildings in the historical Romanian city

highest specialisation in electrical machinery and equipment and a wide range of exports including fats and oils, wood and wooden articles, foot- and headgear, furniture and optical, photographic, cinematographic equipment and medical and surgical instruments and apparatus. The region also has the highest concentration of IT companies outside of the country's capital Bucharest.



Romania has one of the largest agricultural sectors in Europe. The North-West Region ranks sixth nationally in cultivated surface, providing jobs for over 340 000 in farming a variety of crops including cereals, root vegetables, strawberries, mushrooms, apples, peaches, nectarines and nuts. Regional fish farms are capitalising on a significant share (over 25%) of the country's total value of fishery products. Forestry takes fourth place, although across the country the sector continues to experience very low productivity due to obsolete equipment and poor road infrastructure.

Tourism is another major industry in the region with cultural, health, rural and ecotourism all making the most of the region's protected mountain areas and natural and cultural heritage.

Although the number of those attaining higher education qualifications and enrolling in universities fell (2014), the region still counts the highest number of research, development and innovation units after Bucharest. Of the almost 3 500 employees in RDI (2014), almost half were women, which is well over the EU average. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.nord-vest.ro/>

THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND THE NORTH-WEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The North-West Regional Development Agency (RDA) is an independent regional organisation which was established as a public body with corporate status working in fields associated with regional development. The Agency has its own values and mission statement to guide its activities. Its main objectives include reducing regional disparities, supporting the region's sustainable and economic development and enhancing internal, interregional, European and international cooperation.

The main powers of the RDA include devising regional development plans and strategies. Over time, together with the regional planning committees, it has drafted strategic Regional Development Plans for 2000-2002, 2004-2006, 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 PPR.

With regard to regional programmes, the RDA was the implementing authority for pre-accession funds for PHARE Economic and Social Cohesion and government programmes from 1999 to 2006.

From 2007 to 2013, the Agency acted as the intermediary body for the Regional Operational Programme ROP-REGIO which was co-financed from the Structural Funds; the Managing Authority for the 2007-2013 ROP was the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA).

For the 2014-2020 period, the RDA is the Intermediary Body for the 2014-2020 ROP-REGIO which is co-financed from the Structural Funds; the Managing Authority for the 2014-2020 ROP is the MRDPA.

The **Regional Development Council (RDC)** is the regional-level decision-making body and is a voluntary partnership of local communities in the region's six constituent counties.



Investing in social cohesion

Panorama magazine asked Marcel Boloş, Director General of the North-West Regional Development Agency, for his views on the impact Cohesion Policy, EU investment and regional financing has had – and will continue to have – on his region.



How is ESIF support changing the quality of life in your cities and region? Please give some examples of success stories.

Strategically located in Europe and Romania, the North-West Region is actively involved in the industries of the future while being well-rooted in history. Dynamic cities, famous universities, and business and leisure infrastructures coexist with picturesque villages, magnificent scenery, and impressive monuments. The region's major goal for the 2014-2020 period is to grow the regional economy by means of multidimensional and integrated development in order to reduce intra- and interregional disparities and increase the regional standard of living.

Through the European Regional Development Fund operational programme, in the current financial period of 2014-2020 the focus is on several areas where funding is essential to improve the quality of life for inhabitants of the six counties in the North-West Region: Bihor, Bistriţa-Năşăud, Cluj, Maramureş, Satu Mare and Sălaj.

In the 2014-February 2019 period, grant-funded projects were launched in the following fields and are currently being implemented:

Promoting technology transfer; ii) Improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises; iii) Reducing carbon emissions; iv) Supporting sustainable urban development; v) Sustainable preservation and use of cultural heritage; vi) Improving

the road infrastructure of regional importance; vii) Developing sustainable tourism; viii) Health and social infrastructure development; ix) Improving the educational infrastructure; and x) Supporting the regeneration of small and medium-sized towns.

Of the projects successfully completed from the 2007-2013 regional operational programme, I would like to give a special mention to: 'Developing leisure tourism by creating the Nymphaea Thermal Wellness Resort in Oradea', 'Restoring the historic monument site of Simion Bărnuţiu and the casino in Cluj-Napoca City', and 'Creating the German Centre in Bistriţa by rehabilitating the historic Silversmith's House'.

What has contributed to the successful implementation of EU investments on the ground?

Cooperation between local institutions (county councils, town/city halls), regional institutions, such as the North-West Regional Development Agency (RDA), national institutions (management authorities), and European institutions (the Commission and Parliament) has been very important.

< The River Crişul Repede winds its way through the centre of Oradea

Similarly, we have focused on understanding the needs of potential and existing beneficiaries by helping them to propose and carry out viable projects that will contribute to meeting the region's major goal of reducing intra- and interregional disparities and raising the standard of living.

Furthermore, it was crucial to create direct links between local and regional institutions, and the private sector and business actors. For this purpose, the RDA is making available two IT platforms for beneficiaries and partners.

The DG REGIO monitoring platform (<https://regio.nord-vest.ro>) provides real-time information on the implementation stage of projects deemed to be priority topics for the region's development.

Finally, the 'INNO – Rethinking Business Networks' platform for regional investments (see page 20) (<https://www.inno.ro>) provides solutions to immediate problems, such as access to funding sources, finding business partners, technology transfer, recruitment and training.

What are the key messages for a Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 close to territories/regions with geographical specificities, based on your experience and vision?

I believe the modernisation of the Cohesion Policy already proposed by the European Commission will bring many benefits to the North-West Region in Romania, too. Reducing the bureaucracy, providing simpler ways to request payments, and the introduction of a single regulatory framework for the funds made available to the regions have already been welcomed.

Based on your experience of implementing regional investments, what factors are important for better supporting the potential and assets of regions with geographical specificities?

I think the important factors that contribute significantly to supporting and harnessing the specific potential of regions with specific geographic features include an understanding on the part of the local, regional, and national administrative institutions in these areas of the advantages they have and how they can harness them by accessing grants, attracting investment and promoting tourism.

At the same time, very close cross-border cooperation should be expanded to other regions adjacent to border regions, where the areas with specific geographical features cover regions from several EU Member States.

Finally, there should be a local approach to developing the regions in question, designed to be complementary to the development of neighbouring regions, and thereby contributing to achieving the regional cohesion we all want. ■



KEEPING UP THE GOOD WORK

According to **Emil Boc, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca**, the path to the prosperity of all European citizens and the consolidation of the European Union passes through Cohesion Policy. Cohesion Policy must be treated as a priority policy upon which the fate of the EU depends.

In Cluj-Napoca, most of the important projects that allowed us to implement and achieve the strategic goals of a better quality of life for our inhabitants were funded through Cohesion Policy programmes. For 2021-2027, a new collaboration instrument – the European Urban 'city-to-city' Initiative – has the potential to provide access to financing our innovation and urban mobility projects, so that we can continue with the work we have done so far.

It is very important that Cohesion Policy continues and increases in the future, since it impacts directly on the life of each and everyone in the EU. Simplifying the processes should also be considered an objective, as well as keeping the 'n+3' model for the next financial exercise.

North-West Romania

The region, an association of six counties covering an area of 34 160 sq. km, is guided by the principles of sustainable development, respect for tradition and historical, natural and built heritage, and taking advantage of its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.



POPULATION: 2.7 million, comprising approximately 13% of the country's total population. Romanians make up almost 75% of that figure, alongside Hungarians, Roma, Ukrainians and Germans.

LABOUR MARKET: in 2015, the employment rate was 42.33% at the national level and 45.88% at the regional level. Of those, 28.16% were employed in agriculture, 23.04% in industry, 13.02% in commerce and 6.48% in construction.

ECONOMY: in 2014, the GDP/Capita in PPS stood at 13 100 PPS/inhabitant which is 48% of the EU average and 4th in Romania as a whole. International trade exports by sector ranged from machinery and mechanical appliances, electrical equipment, sound and image recorders at 34% of the region's total exports, through miscellaneous articles and furniture, base metals, textiles and clothing to plastic and rubber articles at 6%. There was also a regional comparative advantage in products such as fats and oils, wood, textiles, footwear, electrical machinery and equipment and furniture.

HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: only 3.49% of the population have experienced higher education. In 2014, the number of students (at the region's 8 accredited public higher institutions/universities) fell by 9.26% to 90 418, as against a 7.56% fall at the national level (2005-2014). However, the region has the second largest number of RDI units in Romania, accounting for 9% of national RTDI expenditure in 2013.

The share of innovative companies has fallen considerably from 27% of the total number of companies between 2004-2010 to just 12% in 2012, coming last at the national level.

In 2014, 3 485 people were employed in RDI, of whom 2 280 were researchers. Almost half of all RDI employees are women (48.6%), much higher than the EU average (35%).

There are 26 SMEs per 1 000 inhabitants in the region as against 23 in Romania and 44 in the EU-28. Supporting structures include 15 accredited industrial parks housing 178 companies employing 10 000 people. There is also a technology park – Liberty Park, a private initiative aiming to facilitate connection and communication between companies in related fields. Tetapolis Park is based on a partnership between local authorities and universities in Cluj-Napoca; and Hanna Instruments is a private science park owned by a multinational company developing laboratory equipment and analytical instruments. The region also houses three business incubators and four major logistic parks, and has been supporting cluster initiatives in activities and projects in water, ITC, furniture, energy, agriculture and cosmetics.

OTHER KEY SECTORS: over 340 000 regional workers are in agriculture where cereal crops, root vegetables, strawberries, mushrooms and fruit and nuts dominate. Regional fish farms share (25%) of the total value of Romania's fish products, and forestry ranks fourth in terms of national forestry area. Tourism is a very big attraction in the region with visitors coming to see the wide variety of museums, castles, fortresses and religious sites as well as urban architecture. With 14 certified resorts, medical centres and spas, health tourism is another major attraction, while rural tourism thrives on the widespread protected natural areas in the Maramuresului, Apuseni and Rodnei Mountains.

ORADEA FORTRESS UPGRADED AS A EUROPEAN TOURIST COMPLEX

The aim of revitalising the Oradea Fortress in Bihor County was to put this important monument – and its 1000 years of history – back on the national, regional and international tourist map. Thanks to funding of around RON 36 780 329 (about EUR 7 725 158) including RON 23 197 387 (EUR 4 871 953) from the ERDF, the Fortress has become a representative regional centre for cultural heritage and tourism. The site now houses the offices of the local public authorities, local and cultural institutions and NGOs which are all beneficiaries of the project, along with the Oradea's inhabitants and visitors.

Furthermore, the renovation project is attracting additional revenue streams at regional and local level and creating new jobs in the field of culture, tourism and related economic sectors. At project end in 2015, 119 jobs had either been created or maintained and 19 cultural tourism posts had been set up. By 2018, there had been a 300% increase in the number of tourists to the site, attracting additional revenue streams at the regional and local level and creating new jobs in culture and tourism and their related economic sectors.



FIT FOR PURPOSE: THE 'NYMPHAEA' WELLNESS SPA COMPLEX IN ORADEA



A feeling of well-being began to flow well beyond the city of Oradea in Bihor County when the Nymphaea project came to an end in 2016. Besides proving a great attraction for the local community, visitors and businesses from further afield have enjoyed the benefits provided by what is the largest water park in this region of Europe.

For those looking either for an adrenaline rush or a calm, relaxing and healing environment, or both, Aquapark Nymphaea has used the latest technology across its seven-hectare site to create a fascinating fun- and water-filled world. The attractions include 10 slides, 15 swimming and relaxation pools, play areas for children, six saunas, massage salons, a Turkish bath, sport courts and restaurants.

With a budget of RON 88 342 934 (EUR 18 555 966), including RON 32 343 888 (EUR 6 793 663) from the ERDF, the project increased the average number of tourists to the Nymphaea Complex by 100% and created 50 new jobs in the complex.

www.aquapark-nymphaea.ro/



INNO.RO – RETHINKING BUSINESS NETWORKS



The aim of an internet platform developed by the Regional Investments and Innovative Financial Instruments Department of the North-West RDA is to create a dynamic online ecosystem that can identify and create development opportunities for its members.



A mature and competitive business environment needs digital communication nodes through which information and resources can be shared quickly and easily. To this end, forming a community of professionals via an online platform and providing tools and solutions adapted to current technologies is a natural response to existing market needs.

The platform arose from the need for an online ecosystem that would enable stakeholders in a high-performance and innovative business environment, start-ups, researchers, local authorities, large companies, banks and developers to make contact quickly and efficiently.



INNO is our regional solution to address a global challenge: how can we use the latest business solutions to harness the potential of capital and human resources in a competitive environment? It turns a business environment into a business community. The dynamic digital node and online hub combines entrepreneurial, economic, academic and administrative solutions for the 21st century. Each module offers specific tools and solutions to meet the needs of tomorrow's market today. There are six different modules, a variety of resources and a range of profile types, all accessible to a cross-section of users. There is guidance on access to funding sources, finding suitable business partners, recruitment and training, efficient technology transfer, accelerated innovation, and much more.

In parallel with the platform, we have developed the INNO Mobile application (available in the AppStore and Google Play) through which we will initially give users news in the fields covered by INNO.RO and notifications from the platform. The application will be developed continuously, and future versions will enable users to manage all activity on the platform.

The current model is only the first step towards developing the required online ecosystem. Recommendations from users or suggestions for improvements are encouraged. We invite you to create an account, use the platform and give us your feedback!

www.inno.ro

SELF-SERVICE BIKE-HIRE STATIONS HIT THE ROAD IN CLUJ

In Cluj County, the municipality of Cluj-Napoca and the communes of Florești and Apahida joined forces to develop a coherent network of paths and routes covering approximately 52 kilometres. To endorse the project, a campaign was run to promote the bicycle across the metropolitan area. The overall budget of RON 14422085 (EUR 3031224), including RON 8926309 (EUR 1876114) from the ERDF, was used to create 10.81 kilometres of new cycle paths and 50 self-service bike-hire stations. Furthermore, the project team produced and distributed 30000 brochures, and one promotional film.



Beneficiaries of the initiative include inhabitants of the metropolitan area, the cycling community, students and other groups living in temporary accommodation, and the business community. As a result, 6000 users registered with the scheme in just one year.

www.primariaclujnapoca.ro; www.clujbike.eu

CENTRAL PARK 'GREENS' THE QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE IN BAIJA MARE

In Maramureş County, the residents of the municipality of Baia Mare and neighbouring districts have been the main beneficiaries of the region's new central public park, developed by reusing, remodelling and enhancing the space to create a leisure and recreation area. The ERDF supported the project with RON 10 114 404 (EUR 2 124 795) towards the overall budget of RON 15 921 814 (EUR 3 344 795), the goal being to benefit both local communities and visitors to the area.

The park and cactus exhibition centre were developed by planting trees, hedges and seedlings, constructing four bandstands, three pergolas and a children's playground, building pedestrian paths and an irrigation system, all aiming to increase the green space available per inhabitant. The new facilities are particularly appealing to budding artists who can exhibit their work in three designated areas, and schoolchildren attending botany and ecology classes under the park's educational provisions.



www.baiamare.ro

DIGGING DEEP TO RECREATE ORADEA'S PUBLIC GARDENS IN PIAŢA UNIRII



The Piața Unirii – or Union Square – is a symbolic area in the municipality of Oradea which boasts many lavish landmarks. Work carried out during the project changed the image of the square, to the benefit of the inhabitants, visitors and tourists, and the institutions and businesses with offices there.

Following its large-scale rehabilitation in 2015, Union Square has become the town's historical and cultural centre, attracting tens of thousands of tourists to its historical monuments and palaces as well as modern-day restaurants and cafes. ERDF funding provided RON 14 378 829 (EUR 3 022 028) of the overall budget of RON 24 084 363 (EUR 5 061 517), helping to finance 11 newly created permanent jobs and enhancing the attractiveness of the central location for cultural events and economic activities.

www.oradea.ro



Cohesion Policy support for clean energy on EU islands

Islands, where approximately 15 million Europeans live, have the potential to be frontrunners in the clean energy transition by adopting new technologies and implementing innovative solutions. The EU is providing support – offering new opportunities for growth and jobs.



The European Commission is acting to develop and support the clean energy potential of European island communities.

The Paris Agreement acknowledges that islands are particularly vulnerable to climate change and over dependent on fossil fuels and energy imports. There are more than 2 200 inhabited islands in the EU. Despite having access to renewable sources of energy, such as wind, solar and wave energy, many depend on expensive fossil-fuel imports for their energy supply.

Many of Europe’s islands are small isolated systems and small markets. However, islands, where approximately 15 million Europeans live, have the potential to be frontrunners in the clean energy transition by adopting new technologies and implementing innovative solutions.

Indeed, islands and island regions are a specific case in terms of energy policy because of their isolation, as well as their potential to test and showcase new solutions.

“ Islands have the potential to be frontrunners in the clean energy transition by adopting new technologies and implementing innovative solutions. ”

Taking the initiative

The Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative, under the Energy Union Strategy, provides a long-term framework to help islands generate their own sustainable, low-cost energy. This will result in:

- › **reduced energy costs**, a much higher production of renewable energy, and the construction of energy-storage facilities and demand-response systems, using the latest technologies;
- › **better energy security for islands**, which will become less reliant on imports;
- › **improved air quality**, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and less impact on islands' natural environments; and
- › **the creation of new jobs** and business opportunities, boosting islands' economic self-sufficiency.

The Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative was launched in May 2017 in Malta, where the European Commission and 14 EU Member States¹ signed a political declaration. Other Member States have also been invited to join.

A dedicated secretariat for the initiative was established in 2018 and provides comprehensive guidance to islands on how to kick-start and advance their clean energy transition. This takes the form of stakeholder engagement methodology, support in preparing transition agendas, capacity-building, technical support on developing projects and financial plans as well as networking and community-building opportunities.

Following a call, in February 2019, 26 pilot projects were selected to receive support for the preparation of Clean Energy Transition Agendas. In a first phase, six islands – the **Aran Islands** (Ireland), **Cres-Lošinj** (Croatia), **Sifnos** (Greece), **Culatra** (Portugal), **Salina** (Italy) and **La Palma** (Spain) – will develop and publish their agendas by summer 2019. The other 20 islands, located in Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, will do so by summer 2020.

The 26 islands were selected according to their potential to establish a high-quality transition process with support from the secretariat. To serve as inspiring examples for as many European islands as possible over the coming years, special attention was given to including islands covering a broad variety of geographic and contextual conditions.

EU funding for clean energy investments, including on islands, is available for instance through the Cohesion Policy, Horizon 2020, the LIFE programme, the European Fund for Strategic Investments, and the Connecting Europe Facility.

Tailor-made Cohesion Policy support

The Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative fits very well with the overall Cohesion Policy objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU. The policy makes a key contribution to delivering the Energy Union on the ground, including on EU islands.

This includes investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, smart energy infrastructure and the move towards a decarbonised transport sector, as well as low-carbon research

1) Estonia, Greece, Spain, Germany, Denmark, France, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Sweden, Finland

RENEWABLES ARE HOTTING UP IN AGIOS EFSTRATIOS (‘AI STRATIS’) IN GREECE

The goal of the Ai Stratis’ Green Island project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, is that at least 85% of the island’s energy consumption will come from sources generated by wind and photovoltaic systems. Like many other Greek islands located far from the mainland, Ai Stratis is not connected to the national electricity transmission network. So far, it has relied on public power corporation diesel generators. Both wind and photovoltaic systems will be installed on the island.

A large turbine and a photovoltaic park will produce electricity, the surplus from which will be converted into thermal energy then stored in tanks. With the construction of a new heating network, the system will provide heat for the island’s buildings and houses. The project, which started in 2017 and has a total budget of EUR 8.5 million, is expected to be completed in 2022 (along with the test run). To date, legislation has been completed to designate the project as a pilot project, the hybrid station and district heating studies have been carried out and consultations have been held with the relevant stakeholders on interconnection, management and pricing issues.



and innovation. These investments not only contribute to Energy Union objectives and help Member States achieve EU climate and energy targets, but they also benefit regional development, competitiveness, growth and jobs, while tackling energy poverty and enhancing security of energy supply. All these are important benefits for islands, too.

By its very nature, Cohesion Policy provides a structural and long-term response to the challenges that different regions – including islands – face. The programmes allow for a tailor-made approach, developed in partnership with the key actors on the ground, as well as adjustment to changing circumstances.

Another element that can be particularly important for many islands is that Cohesion Policy puts a special focus on place-based innovation, building on smart specialisation strategies. In this way, it is the main EU policy actively supporting territorial cohesion and investing long term in areas with geographic specificities.

The EU’s macro-regional strategies, covering the Alpine, Baltic Sea, Danube and Adriatic-Ionian regions, as well as European Territorial Cooperation – Interreg – can also play an important role by further promoting and supporting energy issues, including the exchange of knowledge and experiences among islands.

Delivering high-quality energy projects on the ground is key for success, not least to bring about tangible improvements for citizens and businesses and to accelerate the decarbonisation of EU islands. In this context, the work under the Clean Energy for EU Islands can be particularly useful. The development of Clean Energy Transition Agendas, capacity-building and technical support for participating islands, as well as the exchange of experiences and ideas, means that this could be an efficient vehicle to establish a pipeline of good-quality projects able to apply for Cohesion Policy co-financing.

For example, **Menorca** in Spain is working to further improve and update its decarbonisation strategy for 2030 and will get support from the secretariat as one of the pilot regions mentioned above. The decarbonisation strategy is well advanced and aims to achieve an 85 % share of renewables in electricity production by 2030 and substantial reductions in the use of fossil fuels and electrification of transport and buildings, together with a comprehensive set of measures to make the power system fit for such a high share of renewable energy, including battery storage.



MOVING TOWARDS CLEANER TRANSPORT IN GOTLAND, SWEDEN

Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the Sustainable Transports project aims to improve the energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the island of Gotland. In particular, it will focus on the national target of 70% reduction of climate effects from the transport sector in Sweden by 2030. The project aims to reach SMEs that work directly on road transport or with machines used for industrial or construction purposes. The goal is to help these companies to improve their work towards energy efficiency

by organising lectures, workshops and providing consultation on energy efficiency. Another strand of the project focuses on further use of public transport, including improved intermodal mobility solutions. The total budget for the project, which runs from 2018 to 2021, is around EUR 1 million. In the longer term, Sustainable Transports aims to help to reduce the climate impact from transport on the island, through improved energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy.

<https://klimatsynk.se/projektportfoljer/hallbara-transporter/hallbara-transporter.html>



SICILY AND MALTA COOPERATION TO BRIDGE THE RENEWABLE ENERGY GAP

The Renewable Energy Scenarios in Islands project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, defined common strategies to overcome the gap which separates Sicily and Malta from the European average in the use of renewable energy and encourage the transfer of technology and good practices. Furthermore, measures were taken to compare and evaluate energy strategies from the environmental and socio-economic point of view and to identify and implement an action plan for greater diffusion of renewables.

The project created an environmental, socio-economic databank linked to the use of renewable energy sources and a renewable energy atlas to map installations and good practices in the Maltese territory and the provinces of Agrigento and Ragusa in Sicily. An exchange and diffusion of good practices also resulted from two renewable energy tours which introduced the

most significant renewable energy plants to university students and research workers. An energy forum, a workshop organised in a plenary session and four stakeholder groups with entrepreneurs, engineers, politicians and citizens also resulted in renewable energy implementation strategies. Finally, a renewable energy point exchange network connecting cross-border partners was set up in each territory to inform and increase awareness on renewable energy. The project ran from 2011 to 2012 with a total budget of EUR 0.6 million.

<https://bit.ly/2TLqZ76>



It also aims to deliver a range of co-benefits, including security of supply, social participation, benefits to the local economy and jobs, environmental sustainability and integration in the island's landscape and heritage, as Menorca is a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

The Commission is also supporting the efforts more directly, engaging in discussions on how to bring forward the strategy, maximise the use of available EU funding, including the European Regional Development Fund, and leverage private investment. A joint visit by representatives from the Commission's Directorates-General for Regional and Urban Policy and Energy took place in January 2019 to support the work, and the exchanges will continue.

Cohesion Policy is one of the most important sources of funding for the outermost regions to achieve their energy transition. Following the commitment – in the Communication setting a strategy for the outermost regions, adopted

in October 2017 – to mainstream within the EU and internationally through the Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative the good practices developed by these regions, they are taking a prominent role in this initiative.

For instance, the **Canary Islands** hosted the second Clean Energy for EU Islands forum during its presidency of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions, where all the outermost regions could present good practices in the field of energy. As another example, the island of Réunion has experimented, alongside representatives of the Commission and the French national administration, with a new governance tool proposed in the Communication, to speed up its energy transition.

Investing in energy transition

Looking ahead, the Commission proposal for Cohesion Policy in the next financial period, 2021-2027, is to emphasise priorities that will help Europe remain competitive and adjust to globalisation and technological change, including the challenges linked to the clean energy transition.

To promote and trigger a clean and fair energy transition, significant amounts will need to be obligatorily concentrated on a policy objective for a greener, low-carbon Europe, including investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy and smart energy systems, grids and storage at the local level.

Furthermore, the proposal provides for important support to address the wider challenges linked to structural transformation, such as the clean energy transition. This includes support for economic diversification – for instance, support

for SMEs, business incubators, innovation and for cooperation of industry and researchers, capacity building and skills, as well as for sustainable transport and social inclusion.

In all these ways, Cohesion Policy helps Member States and regions, including islands, to anticipate and manage the consequences of the structural changes related to the clean energy transition and other current challenges in a targeted and tailored manner. Often, the different local circumstances do not allow for one-size-fits-all solutions and the support needs to be place-based and offer integrated responses to local needs. Cohesion Policy is able to support a major drive to promote diversification and a move up the value chain in EU regions, based in particular on their smart specialisation strategies.

In view of the preparations for the next generation of Cohesion Policy programmes, the European Semester Country Reports for 2019 and their specific annex on investment guidance on Cohesion Policy funding 2021-2027 highlight the importance of clean energy in islands whenever relevant.

Islands across the entire EU are invited to explore all the available opportunities for Cohesion Policy support for the decarbonisation of their islands, in the current period as well as in the next one. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/Cq49rt>

<https://euislands.eu/clean-energy-islands-start>

The geography of EU discontent

With the next European Parliament elections due to take place from 23-26 May, there is increasing concern about the growing disenchantment with the EU. The first in a series of articles in *Panorama* on anti-EU voting highlights some of the reasons behind citizens' distrust of the EU and national governments.

Over the last decade, across the European Union, anti-EU parties have doubled their votes. Parties that oppose or strongly oppose EU-integration, as defined by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey¹, have increased their vote share in national elections from 9% in 2008 to 18% in 2018 in the EU-28.

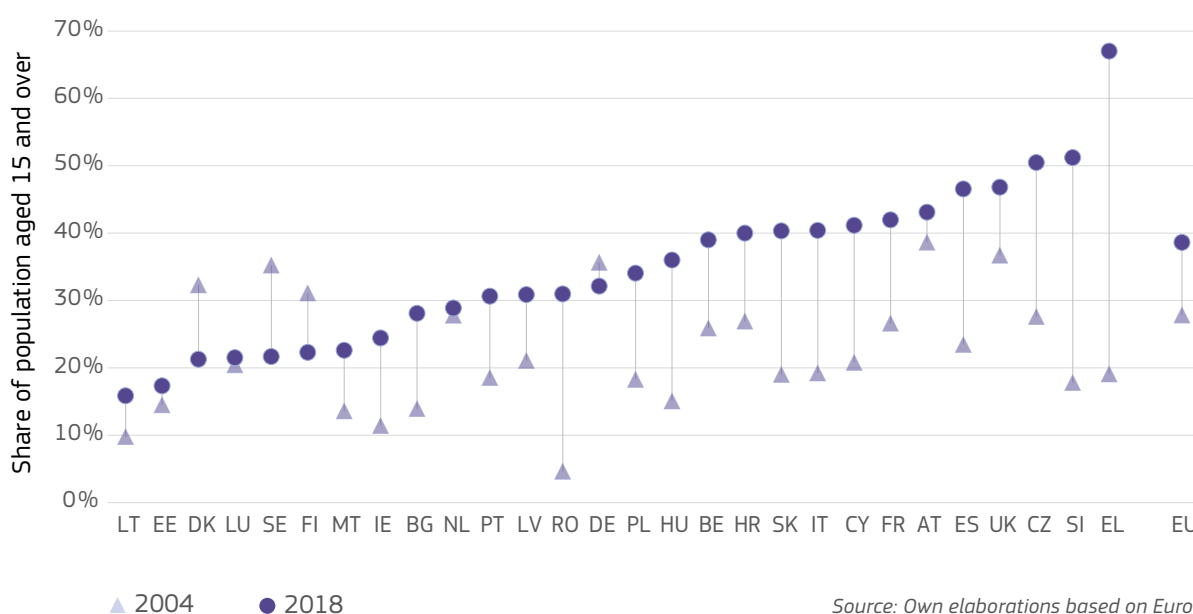
This is not due to changes in a few large Member States. On the contrary, half the Member States have seen the votes going to anti-EU parties increase since 2008. In 10 Member States, the increase has been by more than 10 percentage points. This rapid increase may also have an effect on the European elections in May 2019.

The rise of anti-EU parties is mirrored by a growing disenchantment with the EU. The share of the EU population that tends to distrust the EU grew from 29% in 2008 to a high of 47% in 2013 but dropped off a bit to 39% in 2018. Over the past decade, the number of people who tend to distrust the EU has grown in 21 out of 28 Member States. In 12 Member States, this increase was more than 10 percentage points, while in three Member States – Czechia, Greece and Slovenia – the majority of the population tended not to trust the EU in 2018.

National distrust

High distrust is not unique to the EU. People also tend not to trust national governments. In 12 Member States, the majority do not trust the national government. Distrust of the national government in virtually all Member States is higher than that of the EU as a whole. Yet distrust in national governments is rarely used to advocate breaking up the country, while distrust in the EU is used by many parties to argue for radically reducing its role or to leave the Union.

Share of the population tending not to trust the EU, 2004-2018



Source: Own elaborations based on Eurobarometer data

1) <https://www.chesdata.eu/>

To understand why people vote for parties against EU integration, votes in the most recent national election were collected for over 63 000 electoral districts in the EU-28. Drawing on research on populism in Europe and the USA, this work tested whether the same factors were linked to anti-EU voting.

Research into populism highlights a number of individual characteristics. Older, working-class, male voters on low incomes and with few qualifications to cope with the challenges of a modern economy tend to vote more for populists. It also shows that smaller towns and rural areas tend to vote more populist, as well as areas in decline.

Although there is a strong link between populism and the opposition to EU integration, they are distinct. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey identifies which parties rely heavily on anti-elite and anti-establishment rhetoric, a key characteristic of populism. Parties relying on such rhetoric do not always oppose EU integration. For example, Podemos in Spain scores high on the use of anti-elite rhetoric, but is somewhat in favour of EU integration. Other parties somewhat opposed to EU integration, such as the UK Conservatives or the Dutch Christen Unie, do not use anti-elite rhetoric.

Many drivers of populist voting also boost anti-EU voting. Areas with long-term economic decline, a low employment rate, a low share of tertiary educated, low density and

a higher share of people over 65 tend to vote more for parties opposed or strongly opposed to EU integration.

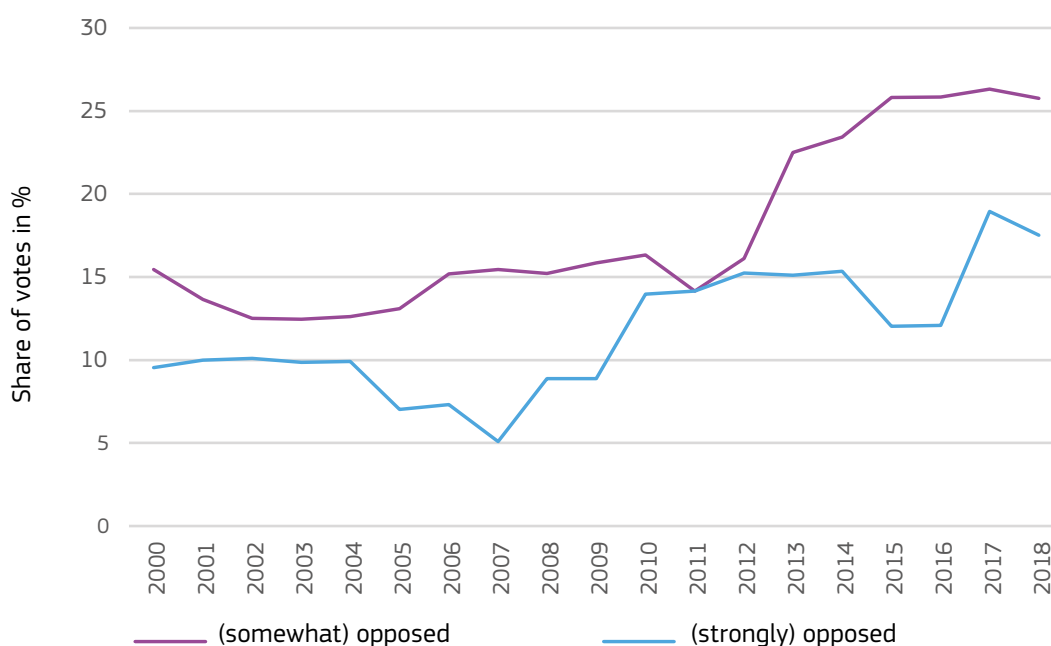
Concern for the future

The impact of the level of economic development was the most surprising: regions with a higher GDP per head vote more for anti-EU parties. As areas with low incomes vote more populist, the expectation was that low GDP per head would boost anti-EU voting. However it is not the poorest areas that vote against the EU, but areas that used to be better off but have declined relative to the rest of the country. These areas may lack the skills and the industries to prosper in a more innovation- and technology-focused economy. As result, residents of these communities are worried about the future of their area.

This is supported by the fact that areas with a shrinking share of industrial jobs also tend to vote more anti-EU. The combination of relatively high GDP per head and long-term economic decline may be a particularly successful breeding ground for discontent and even resentment. Some populist political parties have explicitly targeted ex-industrial areas as they, rightly, expected to be able to pick up more votes there.



Share of vote for parties that oppose EU integration in the EU-28, 2000-2018



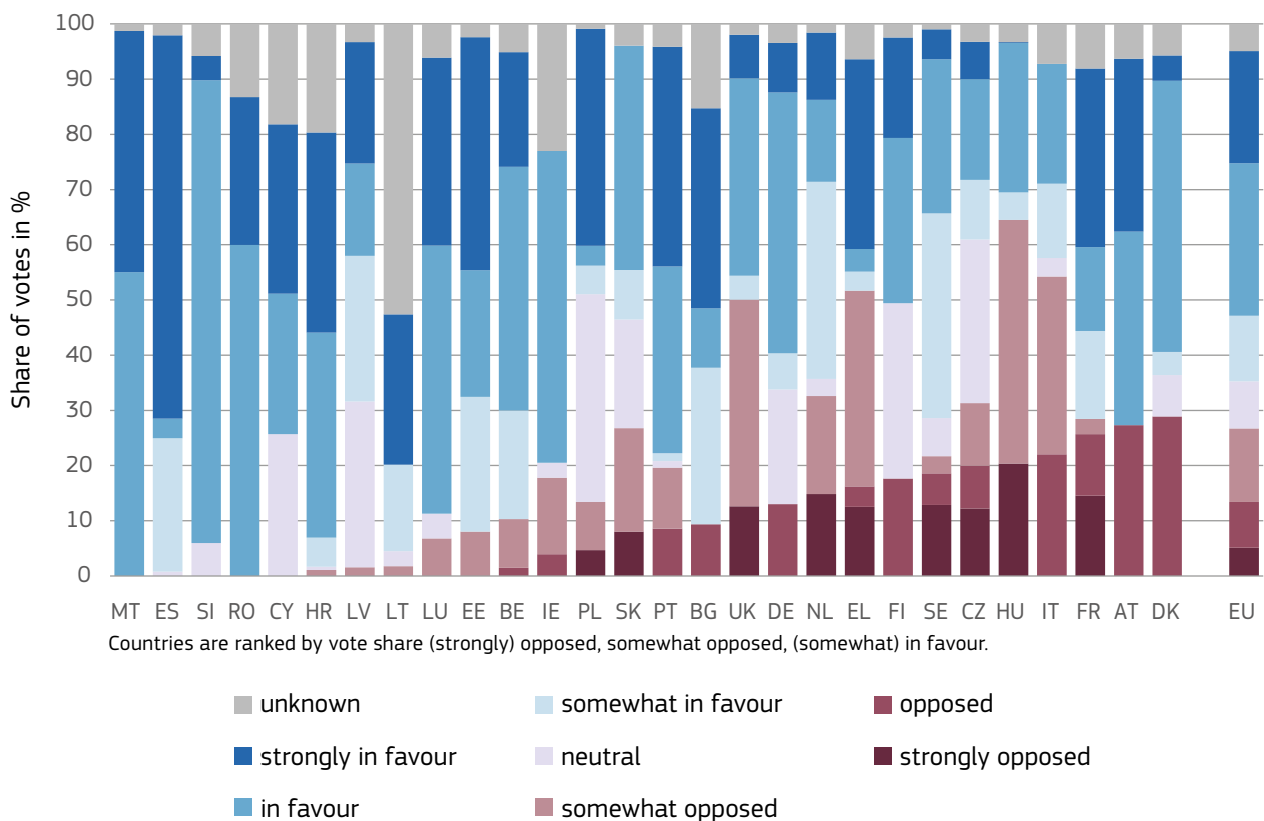
Source: Own elaborations on CHES data and national sources

The other surprising findings were that population decline and employment decline reduced anti-EU voting rather than boosting it, and that net-migration had little to no impact on anti-EU voting.

For more information on the geography of EU discontent, please consult the article and interactive maps at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/mapapps/elections/EUdiscontent.html

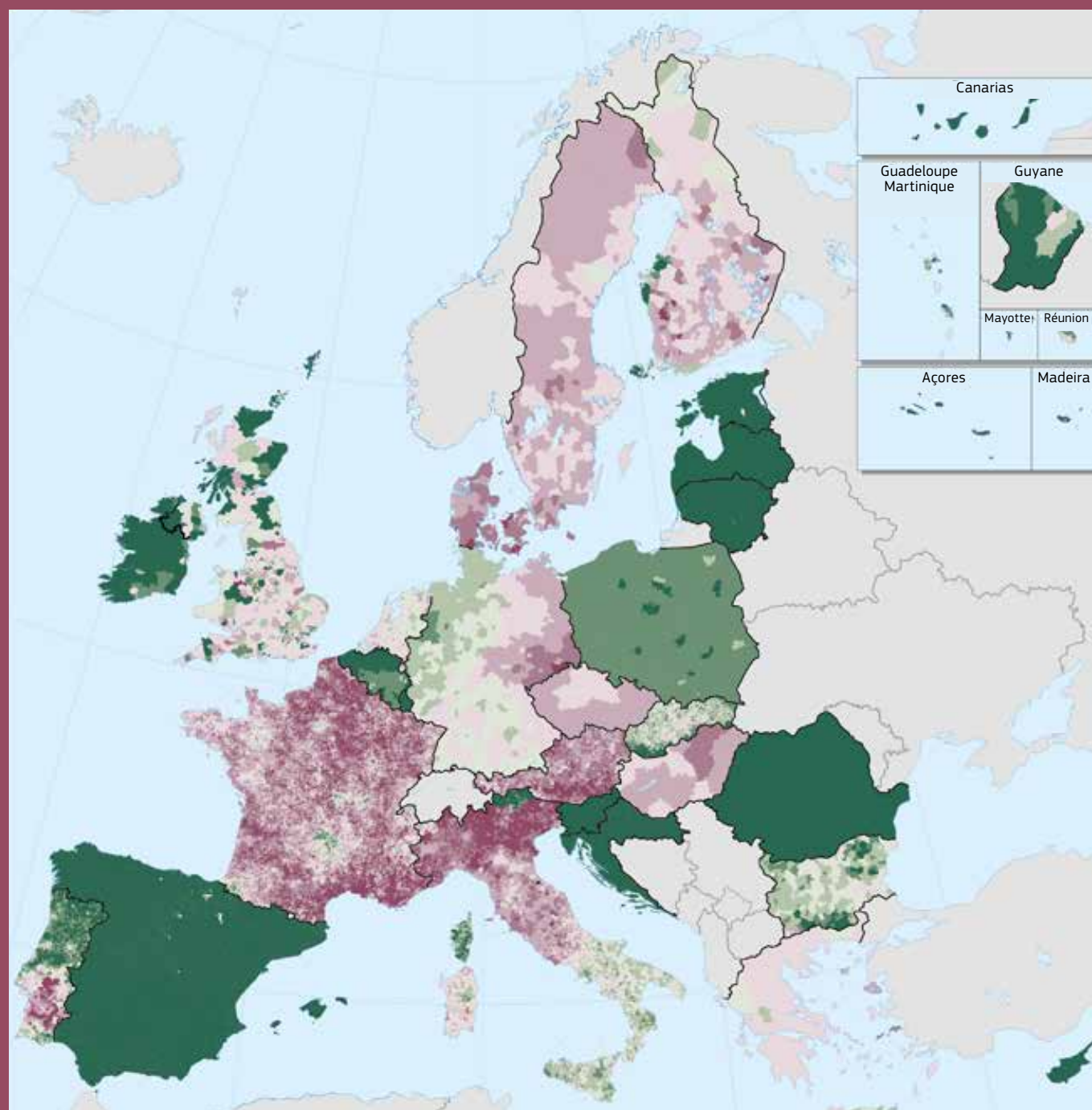
Future issues of *Panorama* will feature articles which look in more detail at the impact of poverty, demography, migration and EU policies.

Votes by party position on EU integration, 2013-2018

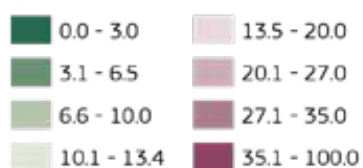


Source: Own elaborations on CHES data and national sources

Share of the vote for parties opposed or strongly opposed to European integration (2013-2018)



% of valid votes



Sources: National authorities, CLEA, Chapel Hill Expert Surveys 2014 and 2017, Eurogeographics, DG REGIO
 2018: IT
 2017: BG, CZ, DE, FR, MT, NL, AT
 2016: IE, ES, HR, CY, LT, RO, SK
 2015: DK, EE, EL, PL, PT, FI, UK
 2014: BE, LV, HU, SI, SE
 2013: LU
 EU-28 average = 13,4%

© EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries

YOUTH4REGIONS MEDIA PROGRAMME

The Youth4Regions media programme supports the development of the next generation of journalists specialised in regional policy. It encourages these young Europeans to communicate on EU-funded projects.



Here we present the remaining two winning texts in the YOUTH4REGIONS blogging competition for young journalists.

Caring and sharing for young refugees in Flanders



Paula is currently studying journalism in Valladolid, Spain. She is very interested in social issues and would like to specialise in international journalism. She also shares her interest in culture by writing book reviews on her blog (lavozaticedida.com).

The CURANT project in Antwerp, Belgium, takes in young people between the ages of 17 and 22 to live alongside locals of the same age to help them integrate. Getting up in the morning to have breakfast with your flatmate is nothing unusual for a Flemish person in Antwerp, were it not for the fact that said flatmate is one of many refugees arriving in Belgium each year.

The EU's CURANT project has set up 66 partnerships between local people and those forced to leave their own countries, in this case young people aged 17 to 22. The refugees and their respective 'buddies' receive EUR 250 each per month and either live in apartments for two or houses that accommodate 16 people. To date, CURANT has helped 66 refugees to improve their circumstances, and by project end (2020) the figure should be at least 75.

But it's not just a place to sleep. The relationship between locals and refugees is based on integration into society through courses, education and training tailored to their circumstances

“ The relationship between locals and refugees is based on integration into society through courses, education and training. ”



and a legal guardian who will become their new guardian angel. These companions are carefully chosen before being paired with a young refugee as there must be a good relationship between the two.

The activities include learning German, which is spoken in the area, looking for a job and creating a social network. These are building blocks for starting a new life or continuing their existing lives in better conditions. All participants are also entitled to help from a social worker; in particular, the refugees receive support to help them become independent, psychological support and advice on integration and careers.

CURANT supports this most vulnerable group of young refugees. Until 18 years, they have access to financial support, integration courses and a legal guardian, but reaching adulthood means losing these benefits. A lack of resources, education and work translates into more young people living in deprived areas and depending on social welfare in the long term. In fact, in 2016, 378 unaccompanied young people

aged 17 to 22 received benefits in Antwerp. The figure would not be so high but for the fact that this small city receives a third of the refugees arriving in Flanders.

The CURANT project would not be possible without the coordination of Antwerp's social welfare department, the public body responsible for granting housing, and the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies at the University of Antwerp, which measures the impact of communal living in the homes, and helps to empower the refugees. Other partners include the NGOs JES vzw, Vormingplus Antwerpen and Solentra, and Atlas Inburgering en Integratie.

The project budget totals EUR 6 million, with almost EUR 5 million from the European Regional Development Fund. ■



Making the most of opportunities close to home

“With EU support, you don’t need to move to another place to develop your potential. You can stay at home and help your region.”



Magdalena holds a degree in language and journalism and is studying the Polish language and literature in Katowice. She is also writing for social NGOs and teaching English.

Feel like moving out? As a sceptical teenager living in a small village on the border you probably don’t see any spectacular chances for development in your region. In Poland? Yes, but you would have to move. In Germany? Maybe, but you don’t want to emigrate. Seems like you’ll finish your schooling here then move to a better place, outside your region. What else can you do? That’s how it works.

Well not exactly. I can assure you the EU’s strategy is not to desert unpopular regions and make stronger labour markets in just a few places. The EU works like an organism, consisting of united regions, or ‘little homelands’. If one part is weaker, we must work on its improvement. So that’s why you don’t need to move out.

Maybe you should check EU funding to find out what’s going on. A German would say: ‘*Karriere ohne Grenzen*’... or maybe: ‘Learning about cross-border career opportunities in Saxony and Lower Silesia’. Sounds boring? Wrong! That project, which started in September 2010, shows the hidden potential of cross-border regions, like Neisse-Nise-Nysa. The title refers to the strategy which, in 2007-2013, involved teachers, educators, local businessmen (from Poland and Germany) and youth, to create opportunities, share tools and knowledge about finding a good workplace. During that time, young

people (also from Czech Republic) and adults participated in many workshops showing that the chance of employment is just around the corner! With EU help, Poland and Germany organised meetings and debates to make career paths smoother.

So what next? When the project finished the team released a handbook of opportunities in Upper Silesia and Saxony. Why don’t other countries do this? Very often we believe we can handle things on our own. But sometimes we need help from people more experienced than us. And we can share our knowledge with them – this is called synergy. As Ralf Ostrowski, project coordinator says: ‘This synergy helps to highlight employment opportunities in this area and boosts local youth’s chances of building careers without having to leave.’

So, it's not so bad in this region then. Investment in this project totalled EUR 618 597, mainly from the EU. What are the visible effects of this funding? First, young people can finally find workplaces that suit their needs. In business Incubators in Zgorzelec or Goerlitz, entrepreneurs can find handbooks and leaflets, and well as qualified workers to give them career-themed advice. Students in the Nysa region have visited workplaces and participated in seminars. Consequently, in schools and universities you can now find information about how to do well in an interview or prepare your first CV.

So now you know! With EU support, you don't need to move to another place to develop your potential. You can stay at home and help your region, so get out there and be creative! ■



The German border post in Goerlitz, a city divided between Germany and Poland



St. Peter and Paul Church, Waidhaus and Altstadt Bridge in Goerlitz, Germany

Estonia TV campaign showcases EU-funded projects

Estonia's public broadcaster ERR ran a series of TV shows last autumn which focused on the impact Structural Funds are having on local communities and the economy. The Managing Authority for Estonia helped to put the campaign together to outline the achievements of EU Cohesion Policy in an entertaining and informative way.

The TV series 'Voyage through Estonia' ran for 16 episodes with an 8pm, prime-time slot on Friday nights. In all, 90 co-funded projects were featured in the programme's run (including 90% supported by EU Structural Funds and 10% Norway grants). Each episode was dedicated to one Estonian county, and there was a concluding round-up show which aired in December 2018.

The programmes were hosted by one of the country's most popular musicians, Ivo Linna, while the well-known actress Liisa Pulk presented video reports about the featured projects, each lasting about three and a half minutes. Along with singing and celebrity appearances, the shows included an informal quiz where public figures answered questions about the projects.

Thinking big

Careful planning and teamwork were required to bring the campaign together. The Managing Authority coordinates a Structural Funds communications network made up of public relations specialists from organisations that implement EU funding in Estonia. It was this group which came up with the idea of running an entire season of shows, rather than just a one-off, as a way of making a big impact on the audience.

'Once we had made that decision we met with the three most influential Estonian TV channels to discuss concepts and get some ideas from them about the show's potential format,' explains Triin Nolo, chief specialist of SF horizontal trainings and communications with the Estonia Managing Authority. 'After that, we put a tender together for bids to make the show, through which we ended up securing a working relationship with ERR.'

According to Nolo, a key aspect of the process was drafting a detailed tender so that the TV company knew exactly what was required in terms of issues such as format, running time, balance of content, use of logos and number of advertising breaks. The tender also included a stipulation that the programmes could be viewed again, for example via the internet.

Selecting projects was a huge undertaking, with more than 400 being considered before the final choice was made. The country's implementing agencies and intermediate bodies provided the TV

company with the list of projects. The goal was to show viewers the broad range of issues covered by EU funding, from employment training and support for businesses to major construction works and backing for scientific innovation.

“...we are sure that we achieved our goal of raising awareness and creating a positive image with the Estonian public about EU Structural Funds and the projects they support.”

Informing and entertaining

Liisa Pulk introduced the projects and interviewed key players, including beneficiaries, project coordinators and service users. Highlights included a visit to the Estonian Academy of Music's new concert hall, constructed with financial support from the European Regional Development Fund.

The presenter also visited a company that received funding to develop a new nasal spray based on the famous mineral water from Värskä in the south-east of the country. In addition, a trip to the Estonian Aviation Academy showcased



On the set, preparing to shoot the show



Ivo Linna during shooting



Two young Estonian singers Tuuli Rand and Teele Viira and actress Piret Rauk on set for the Saaremaa programme



Liisa Pulk waving to our Eurovision Song Contest singer Jüri Pootsman on the set of the Raplamaa counties show

a state-of-the-art helicopter simulator, while a visit to the historical area of Mulgimaa focused on EU support for the creation of a technology learning centre.

The shows proved popular with the Estonian viewing public: audiences always ranked in the top ten weekly viewing figures, peaking once at number four in the ratings. That equates to around 110 000 to 130 000 viewers per week – approximately 9-10% of the population.

'We will assess the campaign's impact when we carry out our annual awareness survey later in the year. But as the shows' viewing statistics were surprisingly high, we are sure that we achieved our goal of raising awareness and creating a positive image with the Estonian public about EU Structural Funds and the projects they support,' adds Nolo.

Go for bold ideas

Now the Estonia EU funding team plans to build on the success of the campaign with a number of complementary events scheduled for 2019. On 9 May, the country will celebrate EU Day, which heralds a week of live events all around Estonia.

'To mark 15 years of Estonian membership of the EU, we have collaborated with the European Parliament's office in Estonia to arrange a countrywide tour in May, where we will do a live version of the TV show with Ivo Linna and his band,' explains Nolo. 'This time the quiz questions will be answered by local candidates for the European Parliament.'

When it comes to colleagues developing similar campaigns in their regions, Nolo has the following advice: 'Be brave and bold, because good ideas tend to fly high. Gather a good team and brainstorm. Trust your TV channel but remain engaged throughout the process and remind them of the importance of putting content about the Structural Funds at the centre of the show.' ■

FIND OUT MORE

'Voyage through Estonia' TV feed:

<https://etv.err.ee/895572/reis-umber-eesi-15-16>



Good news for Portugal ... and future EU investment

The Alcobaça Monastery is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in central Portugal

In November 2018, the Integrity Pact Stakeholder Event ‘Together towards Clean Contracting: New developments and the road ahead’ presented some important project results, shared lessons learned and looked forward to the challenges ahead.

In Portugal, the last officially signed Integrity Pact (IP) will promote transparency and efficiency in an EU-funded project focusing on the restoration and preservation of the Alcobaça Monastery. This is one of the country’s historical and architectural medieval treasures and is among the most influential Cistercian centres in the Iberian Peninsula and Europe as a whole.

The Portuguese Government’s General Directorate of Cultural Heritage will be supported by Transparency International Portugal in ensuring that the project, which is worth around EUR 1 million, will deliver on its objectives and that citizens will continue to be informed about and involved in monitoring the work.

With parts of the structure dating back to the 12th century, the Alcobaça Monastery retains many of its medieval features. As a result of its unique history, the monument has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With large numbers of tourists visiting Alcobaça, the work will help to protect the building’s intricate designs, including the famous

tombs of King Pedro I and Inês de Castro commissioned by King Pedro I after the dramatic love story that would later inspire many poets and artists.

Showcasing transparency and value added

This is the last of the 17 projects in 11 Member States to use IPs for EU-funded projects as part of a joint pilot initiative between Transparency International and the European Commission’s DG Regional and Urban Policy. Their goal is to boost transparency and value for money for EU investment under Cohesion Policy. As the implementation of these projects has progressed, some significant results have been observed and important lessons learned for the future.

On 28 November 2018, the Integrity Pact Stakeholder Event brought together around 120 stakeholders from all 17 IPs: civil society partners, contracting authorities, managing authorities, contractors, as well as other important interested parties (anti-corruption authorities, public procurement offices), representatives of the European Commission (in particular DG Regio), and the Transparency International EU Liaison Office and Secretariat.

The aim of the event was to showcase best practice and promote ambition among the existing IPs. Three years into the project, participants shared lessons learned, achievements and

remaining challenges emerging from this collaboration. Furthermore, they looked to the future and expanded the focus to consider IPs within the broader, 'clean contracting' picture. The stakeholders also discussed how different initiatives can build on and complement each other to strive for more efficient, effective and corruption-free public procurement.

Funding the future

During the day, plenary and group sessions covered different topics: lessons and impressions from stakeholders, results of a mid-term learning review recently conducted within the framework of the project, DG Regio's perspective on the IPs in the context of the latest trends in public procurement, the issue of low competition and single-bidding in public procurement, ongoing efforts to break down barriers between different stakeholders involved in public procurement, and how to foster greater transparency and openness and build a coalition for action with better open data.

Patricia Moreira, Managing Director of the Transparency International Secretariat, has no doubts: IPs are important to build trust among different stakeholders (civil society, national authorities, private sector, citizens). They have helped to develop a stronger appreciation of the role that IPs and civil society engagement can play in building cleaner contracting, alongside other work such as open data initiatives.

“Efficiency, transparency and performance will remain key elements of the next generation of EU programmes and funds and, in particular, of Cohesion Policy.”

According to Marc Lemaître, Director-General of DG REGIO, this pilot project shows how public institutions can benefit from the cooperation with civil society in order to become more transparent, efficient and result-oriented, while better protecting the EU's financial interests. This is also a clear message for the future. Efficiency, transparency and performance will remain key elements of the next generation of EU programmes and funds and, in particular, of Cohesion Policy. ■

FIND OUT MORE

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/integrity-pacts/

<https://bit.ly/2UzmSaE>

<https://bit.ly/2G10fsY>



DATA POINT

Keeping track of the climate action budget

Did you know that climate action is supported with major Cohesion Policy investment? So, why is it necessary to track EU investments in climate action?

To reach the EU's agreed climate and energy targets by 2020, the European Commission has committed to support climate action with at least 20% of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) budget. That political commitment is part of a wider effort to mainstream climate actions and contribute to the efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt our natural and human-built environment and economy to the expected impact of climate change at the local, national and EU levels.

The European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund were identified as important contributors to the overall EU tracking target given their objectives and scope. More than 20% of the budget from the two funds is climate-action-related, involving an investment of more than EUR 54 billion from the EU budget.

How do we track financial inputs in Cohesion Policy?

Member States provide information on the support for climate change objectives (financial input) based on the "categories of intervention" – a list of investment actions appropriate for each of the funds. The methodology consists of assigning a specific weighting to the financial support provided under the funds, depending on the expected contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. Three weightings are assigned (with ERDF examples):

- **100%** in cases where the support makes a significant climate contribution (i.e. sustainable energy, climate-related risk prevention, climate-related research, technology development and innovation, etc.);
- **40%** in the case of a moderate contribution (clean urban transport, rail, intermodal and other public transport, etc.); and
- **0%** in cases where the support does not contribute or where the contribution is insignificant (most intervention field codes).

Is it only about tracking the initial plans?

No. Using the monitoring system and the power of open data, the Commission has made it possible now to track in detail the progress in delivering the investments. Using data received annually, the Commission tracks the allocation of investments to selected projects (decided) and the actual spending by those projects on the ground.

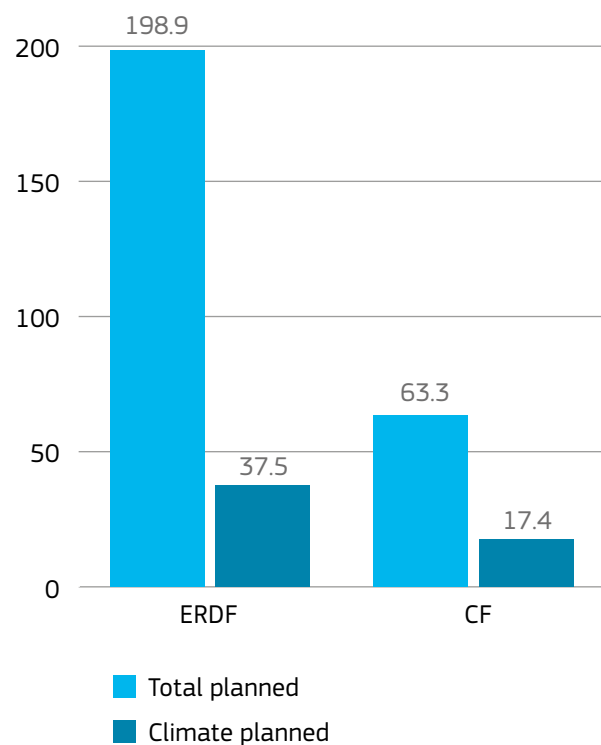
The data allows interested parties to analyse:

- › The planned overall EUR contribution from each of the Cohesion Policy funds in the period 2014-2020;
- › The reported progress in project selection and actual expenditure by selected projects;
- › The 34 ERDF/CF climate-relevant investments;
- › The country plans and progress, right down to specific programmes by intervention field.

It really is a detailed tracking system!

Financial tracking is the vital first step in delivering results. In addition to climate tracking investment and specific thematic concentration targets, climate-relevant thematic objectives with “investment priorities” were included in the legislation and programmes to provide the definition of specific interventions (actions with outputs) and policy objectives (with policy result indicators). ■

ERDF and Cohesion Fund climate tracking (EUR billion)



Check out this interactive open data story for a guide to the different charts and insight into the climate tracking data:

<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/a8jn-38y8>

Do you have an issue you would like discussed in future *Panorama* DATA POINT features?

Is there a dataset you would like us to put on the ESIF Open Data Platform?

If so, please e-mail: REGIO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu

Follow the discussion on TWITTER [#ESIFOpenData](https://twitter.com/ESIFOpenData)

or subscribe to our newsletter: http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/index.cfm?service_id=788

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

PANORAMA
welcomes your
contributions!

In Your Own Words is the section in *Panorama* where stakeholders at local, regional, national and European level outline their achievements for the 2014-2020 period and share their views on the ongoing and crucial discussions

on Cohesion Policy post-2020. *Panorama* welcomes contributions in your own language, which we may feature in future editions. Please contact us at regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu for further information on guidelines and deadlines.

Local communities take the lead in Kujawsko-Pomorskie

With the aim of inspiring local communities to generate new project ideas that are very close to their needs, Kujawsko-Pomorskie is one of two regions in Poland which uses a 'small-scale' territorial instrument, the so-called Community-led local development (CLLD).

After the initial turbulent phase during which our Regional Operational Programme (ROP) managing authority struggled to find the right model to implement this new Cohesion Policy instrument, the tool proved very effective in involving citizens at the local level in developing responses to the current social, environmental and economic challenges.

In Kujawsko-Pomorskie, 28 local action groups (LAGs) were formed which started to carry out projects that combined all the Structural Funds: ERDF, EFS, EFARD and EMFF – in a formula unique on the European scale!

Outstanding projects which focused on underprivileged teenagers, the elderly, and ex-prisoners were implemented

by the urban LAG in Toruń. Another exemplary project – 'Welfare farms' – was launched, *inter alia*, by rural LAG Bory Tucholskie. In this project, local farmers created an example of 'day care' facilities in their farmhouses for seniors.

Since the CLLD is not a mainstream tool either in Poland or in other EU countries, our region is trying to exchange information regularly with other regions. We have also participated in a peer-to-peer review with the Hungarian Regional Operational Authorities.

In view of the European Commission's proposal for the Common Provision Regulation post-2020, with Policy Objective 5 'Europe closer to citizens', the CLLD mechanism which allows for real bottom-up initiatives, including small organisations, informal groups and communities, should be further developed.

Therefore, we are hoping to create a CLLD forum with other European regions and with the help of the European Commission where we can exchange good practices and seek solutions to increase the flexibility for



Piotr Calbecki
Marshal of the Region

CLLD projects, harmonise the legal requirements governing CLLD by different Structural Funds and simplify the complex administrative arrangements. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.kujawsko-pomorskie.pl/>

Post-2020 Cohesion Policy from the perspective of Czechia

Cohesion Policy is one of the most important tools for achieving the EU's objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion. It not only helps to offset any regional and national disparities, while addressing territorial needs in a targeted way, but also forms the basic backbone for EU investments.

By 2020, Czechia will have received approximately EUR 51.4 billion since it joined the EU in 2004, which is reflected in the country's growth and development. Our regions have already either exceeded the EU average of maturity or are rapidly approaching it.

This is also reflected in the proposal for the future Cohesion Policy framework. Czechia will receive EUR 3.5 billion more than in the current period. At the same time, projects will need to be co-financed to a greater extent and under stricter conditions than in those countries with less-developed regions. It is a challenge for us all to use lower levels of finance for quality and well-prepared investments.

The first big step was taken in February when the Czechia government adopted the National Concept of Cohesion Policy Implementation in the Czech Republic



David Škorňa
*Director of the Partnership Agreement,
Evaluation and Strategy Department
National Coordination Authority,
Ministry of Regional Development CZ*

post-2020. This document sets out the objectives and priorities of Czechia for the next period, as well as the structure of the operational programmes and their governing bodies.

We will focus on supporting new technologies and smart solutions, especially in the context of integrated solutions. Our goal is to significantly shift the idea of the circular economy so that investments in different areas are both profitable and environmentally friendly. In addition, modernisation of infrastructure, the introduction of alternative fuels in transport and the promotion of low-carbon technologies (both in energy and industry and transport) will also be a focus. Measures to combat droughts, with a focus on their prevention, are particularly important from our point of view.

This year there is a lot ahead of us. At the EU level, the wording of legislation needs to be fine-tuned and maximum consensus achieved so that the new period does not start with a major delay at a very early stage. In the negotiations ahead, Czechia considers it is crucial, for example, to find a consensus on thematic concentration rules, which are now very strict, as well as in financial terms – reducing the level of EU funding and the N + 2 de-commitment rule would bring us major problems. In 2019, at the national level, we will focus on processing the Partnership Agreement and operational programmes. ■



Korean delegation inspired by transnational cooperation in Europe

During a visit to the transnational Interreg Mediterranean programme, Mr Sung-hoon, Kim, head of the Balance Development Evaluation Centre (BDEC) at the Korea Evaluation Institute of Industrial Technology (KEIT) gave his reaction to cooperation among the Mediterranean's neighbouring countries. Delegated by the Presidential Committee for Balanced National Development, the centre evaluates performances, conducts research and provides an information platform for balanced development projects in Korea. The purpose of the Korean delegation's visit was to find inspiration from the implementation of regional policy in Europe and to see how Mediterranean countries are cooperating in specific domains to strengthen the EU's role as a strong economic, social and political model.

Why were you interested in visiting the Interreg MED programme?

I was interested in learning how 13 countries in the Mediterranean are cooperating to develop the region. As you are aware, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) often faces difficulties in promoting transboundary development programmes with neighbouring countries like China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and Japan due to the complex political situations and historical background. Thus, I was hoping to take some lessons from the MED programme to North-East Asia.



MAESTRALE: THINKING OUTSIDE BORDERS

Climate change knows no borders. In the summer, temperatures continue to rise, sometimes reaching 50°C, making the Mediterranean one of the areas most affected by this global phenomenon on the planet. Extreme temperatures produce draughts, forest fires and floods. All the countries around the Mediterranean are at the forefront of these challenges.

Consequently, governments must tackle these global issues together. No single country can deal with challenges on such a massive scale alone, which is precisely why the European Commission created transnational cooperation programmes. Interreg Mediterranean is one of them.

In the Mediterranean, Portugal, Spain, France, Gibraltar, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Cyprus gathered their forces to jointly find solutions to common challenges. Even though these have a transnational scope, each and every one of the 91 projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Programme framework is producing results which benefit citizens' everyday lives in the regions covered by the Interreg MED Programme.

Recently, the MAESTRALE project proved that involving civil society in a cooperation project is not only possible but is also beneficial. Several high-school students from the Professional Technical School Tito Sarrocchi, in Siena, Italy participated in a Blue Growth experiment promoted by the University of Siena. They designed, constructed and assembled a prototype of a wind turbine which they launched in the waters of the Fonte Gaia fountain, to the fascination of onlookers.

However, this was just the beginning of a wonderful journey. They continued the experience in Malaga, Spain, to show other students the prototype they had built. Together, they rebuilt a new vertical version of the prototype and tested it.

What better way to build the future of Europe than to make young people understand its challenges and solutions through cooperation?

The Interreg MED Programme covers a wide range of topics: innovation in Blue and Green Growth and social and creative industries; efficient public buildings, renewable local energy sources in energy-mix strategies and plans, low-carbon transport systems, sustainable tourism, as well as biodiversity protection and natural resources.

With a total investment of EUR 275 million, the programme seeks to promote greener, more sustainable economic growth until 2020.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://maestrale.interreg-med.eu/>



I was also impressed to find that the collaborative areas in the programme are not limited to technology, R&D and urban regeneration. They also include comprehensive and transnational problems such as low-carbon development, protection of natural and cultural resources, promoting innovation and strengthening governance which are more complicated and difficult to coordinate among countries.

What were your expectations of visiting a cooperation programme?

I was expecting to learn about the performance evaluation system and methodologies, evaluation index, and feedback system of evaluation results from the Interreg MED programme. I was also hoping to get new ideas on a balanced development programme and regional development concepts and their operational system, applicable to South Korea.

What was your main impression of regional development through European cooperation?

It was impressive to see that 13 countries along the northern Mediterranean coast work together on regional development while investing in and supporting projects covering more than three countries.

I was particularly interested in 'Blue Growth', one of the programme's seven subject areas, as South Korea is located on the Korean Peninsula. Although we are currently working together with China and Japan on environmental issues, including transboundary air pollution through the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership, I believe its scope and areas for cooperation need to be expanded. In this regard, the topics and projects in the Interreg MED programme, such as blue energy, fishing

and aquaculture, integrated maritime surveillance, biotechnologies, and coastal and maritime tourism are very practical and result-oriented.

In addition, it was useful to learn about the detailed performance indicators and goals of each thematic objective of the 2014-2020 programme. BDEC also makes efforts to check the feasibility of balanced development projects and assess their indicators of achievement. ■



Scandola Nature Reserve, Corsica

NEWS [IN BRIEF]

**'INTERREG HIGHLIGHTS' –
OR INTERREG MADE SIMPLE**

In our uncertain world, one thing is for sure: we could be better at explaining to the taxpayer where his or her money goes and with what results. That is where the new Interreg Highlights blog comes in. The blog is a joint venture by the whole Interreg community, bringing together an array of stories about the human and regional benefits of Interreg cooperation all over Europe. It is the link you might happily send to your friends and family when they ask what Interreg is all about.

In the past decade, most of our communication has shifted from print to online platforms, with social media being the centre of attention for many. Yet, every trend has its flip side. In the inevitable overflow of information, research shows that people are starting to long for more than 280-character messages. It is challenging to build a thorough understanding of any topic from fragmented pieces of information. Interreg Highlights aims to be a reliable and interesting source of European insights by providing versatile yet easy to understand articles about Interreg.

The Interreg Highlights blog is open for contributions providing interesting angles on Interreg cooperation, be it through its people or the changes in their lives, regions, policies or understanding.

You can find Interreg Highlights under the Interreg information portal at www.interreg.eu/interreg-highlights

Get in touch if you have a story you would like to

publish: linda.talve@interact-eu.net or

eva.martinez@interact-eu.net

REGIOSTARS AWARDS 2019

Every year, the European Commission rewards those EU-funded projects which demonstrate excellence and new approaches in regional development. With the goal of inspiring other regions and project managers across Europe, participating projects are in the spotlight of communication activities at the European level.

In 2019, the REGIOSTARS focus is on five areas that are crucial for the future of EU regional policy:

- promoting digital transformation;
- connecting the green, blue and grey;
- combatting inequalities and poverty;
- building climate-resilient cities;
- modernising health services.

High-level academics will assess the submitted project applications and crown the winners. In addition, the public will select and award its own winning project through a public online vote. The winners in the five categories, alongside the public's choice, will receive their well-deserved price at the celebratory RegioStars ceremony, scheduled to take place in Brussels in October 2019.

A Guide for Applicants is available via the [online application platform](#) which is open from 19 February until 9 May 2019. This provides all the necessary information, a detailed description of this year's award categories, plus the eligibility and award criteria.



LIVING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 3 472 892**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 2 778 313**

The city of Utrecht offers an innovative and inclusive approach to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers from day one. Residents and refugees live, learn and work together in the U-RLP project – an Urban Innovative Action funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

The U-RLP project in Utrecht, West Netherlands is located next to an asylum centre to facilitate and stimulate meaningful encounters between local young residents and refugees. They can all enjoy the shared social spaces and benefit from the personal and professional development programmes on offer, such as international entrepreneurship, language courses and other social activities.

The initial U-RLP project was developed in 2016 to address local concerns regarding a temporary refugee reception centre in the district of Overvecht. There was a high demand for housing in the district with many residents on low incomes. U-RLP offered a way to provide temporary housing for local young residents, as well as facilitating integration for refugees through purposeful encounters intended to improve mutual understanding.

This unique approach is known locally and (inter)nationally as Plan Einstein, due to its location in the Einsteindreef, a residential road in Overvecht. Young Dutch people moved in at the start of the project in November 2016, while the refugees arrived during the first half of 2017 as the state reception facilities were being finalised.

In November 2018, this temporary refugee reception centre closed. Since January 2019, the lessons learned are informing the development of the long-term asylum seekers' centre Plan Einstein Haydn.

Creating a community

The concept and vision behind the Plan Einstein U-RLP project is the principle of 'activation from day one', with opportunities for people to mingle from the start. Local young residents and refugees can benefit from individual coaching and attend professional development events as well as the courses provided.

Creating a community has been central to the project's success. An open day in September 2017 attracted 600 attendees. Spontaneous social initiatives have sprung from the initiative, such as the community radio station 'Radio Einstein'. Residents have started businesses, are volunteering in the city, or are taking their studies further.

The project illustrates Utrecht's wider approach to refugee integration whereby volunteers and professionals work together in consultation with stakeholders.

The Dutch government is currently looking into using U-RLP's integration model in all Dutch reception facilities. The project was also presented to representatives from other local authorities at the EURO CITIES Social Affairs Forum in March 2018 as an example of how to develop social cohesion. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://plan-einstein.nl/>

PROJECTS

NEW HIGH-SPEED TRAINS BOOST POLAND'S MAŁOPOLSKIE REGION

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 71 441 548**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 41 132 031**

The European Regional Development Fund has supported investment in high-speed trains and a new rail route, boosting the capacity of the regional rail services around Kraków.

The train operating company Koleje Małopolskie has developed a high-speed suburban railway that is both passenger- and environmentally friendly. The aim is to increase the volume of rail transport in the Małopolskie region in southern Poland.

ERDF funding contributed to the purchase of 13 electric multiple unit (EMU) trains as well as warranty, servicing and maintenance. The trains are manufactured by the Polish company Newag SA.

The project also established new rail routes, such as a line connecting the key economic and tourist hubs of Kraków and Tarnów.

Passenger safety and comfort

The new Impuls family of EMU trains comply with the strictest European standards in crashworthiness and resistance.

They also provide passengers with comfortable facilities such as quiet cars, air conditioning, ergonomic chairs, Wi-Fi and electrical sockets. The trains are designed to accommodate passengers with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.

Other advanced features include a modern audio-visual passenger information system, interior monitoring, ticket machines and a passenger counting system. Each train is equipped with automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and all employees receive training on first aid and how to use AEDs.

More and more people are opting for the speed, comfort and convenience of the new trains and routes in the region. This helps to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution in and around urban agglomerations in Małopolskie. Commuters and urban residents benefit from a better quality of life and the region is more attractive for business investment.

A further environmental benefit is that the trains recuperate energy from the overhead lines, which lowers their electricity consumption and makes them more economical and energy efficient to run. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.malopolska.pl/>



PROJECTS

ALPINE COUNTRIES WORK TOGETHER FOR A LOW-CARBON FUTURE

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR EUR 2 146 210**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 1 580 877**

The interregional IMEAS project is providing practical guidance and collaboration opportunities to help key players in the Alpine region make the complex transition to a low-carbon economy.

A global energy transition is under way, propelled by the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to limit climate change. The EU's long-term strategy is for a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

Alpine countries face some common challenges and opportunities in developing their low-carbon policies and sustainable energy plans. The seven countries in the interregional Alpine Space programme, which is funded by the European Regional Development Fund, are working to develop shared solutions through the IMEAS project.

IMEAS stands for 'Integrated and Multi-level Energy models for the Alpine Space'. The project team is multidisciplinary, bringing together partners with technical, sociological, and territorial expertise.

Many public and private actors, from diverse sectors, have a role to play in the energy transition. IMEAS is developing a network model for all the stakeholders involved which describes their roles, relationships and decision-making incentives. Different levels of governance – from villages to national governments – are also included. The aim is that this multidimensional understanding will foster more and better cooperation.

Practical tools

IMEAS' goal is to ensure a more consistent, integrated and participatory approach. Public authorities and others responsible for sustainable energy can use the project tools to involve key players at every stage of planning and implementation.

The practical support available via the IMEAS web platform includes roadmaps for long-term, low-carbon energy development throughout the region after 2020.

There is also comprehensive guidance on how to make low-carbon initiatives more efficient and effective. People can share innovations and experiences from the diverse approaches that are also a strength in the Alpine region.

The project will end in December 2019 and the IMEAS web platform will run for five years, until 2023. While it has not directly created any jobs, it addresses many issues related to energy and climate planning, which represents a growing research and innovation sector. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/imeas/en/home>

<https://www.imeas.eu>

AGENDA

7-8 MAY

Budva (ME)

EUSAIR Forum,

22-23 MAY

Bucharest (RO)

Interreg Annual Conference

20-21 JUNE

Bucharest (RO)

**'Investing in our Shared Future:
the 8th Conference for the Evaluation
of EU Cohesion Policy'**

7-10 OCTOBER

Brussels (BE)

European Week of Regions and Cities

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